trees. The new unpainted wooden residence of the parish priest is near the church. The plaza of Siaton is unimproved except for a circle of cement used for fiesta dances, now covered with pungent copra, and a basketball court. Across the street from the plaza is a small wooden building which houses the telegraph and postoffice and offices of the municipal agricultural agent and the government midwife. To the rear of the postoffice building is a neat wooden Protestant church.

The new elementary school is the pride of the community and the center for social gatherings--functions usurped from the church. There are three painted wooden buildings, but the other structures are temporary classrooms of bamboo and nipa. The schoolyard is covered with a green lawn and there are cement paths lined with oleander and small shrubs. By the domestic science building is a struggling rose garden which every "progressive" school must have. Across the street from the school buildings are several sari-sari stores which cater to the appetites of the school children. Farther west a new concrete bridge spans the wide, shallow (in the dry season) Siaton River. Overlooking the bridge is Pangligiran hill where Don Antoy, a legendary supernatural, lives in a grand palace of marble and gold, invisible to ordinary humans.

The houses of the poblacion are similar to those seen along the National Road. However, there are some white wooden houses where local officials live. To the

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Siaton Schools During the Spanish Period

Prior to 1863 there was no systematic educational structure or administration in the Philippines. "The government did not have any agency for the control and supervision of the schools. Each school was left to its own devices--to choose its teachers, to adopt its curriculum, to administer its own affairs according to the desire of the founders.[104] The royal decree of 1863 extended to the Philippines a school system originally developed for Cuba and provided for "incomplete" primary schools in each barrio of 500 persons or less. The supervision of local schools was given to the parish priests. Two years later the organization of secondary schools, one in each province, was also decreed.[105]

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There had been a school, for boys and girls, in Siaton for several decades before 1890 but the Cadiane manuscript does not go into detail. In 1891, however, Baldomores Torres, the Guardia Civil commandant, decided

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[104] "The parish priest, as ex-officio supervisor, had the following functions: to visit the schools, to admonish erring teachers or to suspend them, to encourage attendance of pupils, to certify whether a child should be admitted to the school, free of charge or not, to recommend to the provincial inspector any needed improvement of the school, and to supervise the teaching of religion and morals." Isidro Antonio, The Philippine Educational System. 2nd ed. Manila, Bookman, Inc., 1949, pp. 9-10.

[105] Katherine M. Cook, Public Education in the Philippine Islands, Bulletin 1935, No. 9, Washington, D. C. U. S. Department of the Interior, Office of Education, 1935, p. 22.

to build a new school in the poblacion. He told the people to collect the materials for the building and selected the plaza as the site. The parish priest, Jorje Carcabilla, objected to the erection of the school on land that belonged to the church.

A bitter struggle between the two leaders followed. The quarrel over the school was secondary; the root of the disagreement was the conflict between the parish priest and the commandant over the management of local affairs and the accession of heirs of the Spanish throne. The political rivalries of Spain were carried to the Philippines. Carcabilla was a supporter of the Carlista party and Torres of the Isabelina party who were then quarreling over the accession rights of Isabel and Carlos, King Ferdinand's children.

Cadiane describes the priest as "cruel, like a soldier," but he is an obvious admirer of Torres. The priest emerged victorious in this dispute and classes continued to be held in the old school building. This victory of the parish priest over the commandant of the Guardia Civil indicates the power the priests then wielded in the Philippines.

Zaide writes that the average parish priest during the Spanish period was "virtual ruler of the town."[106]

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[106] Zaide, The Philippines Since the British Invasion, p. 163.